Report to E-Government and ICT Scrutiny Standing Panel

Epping Forest District Council

Date of meeting: 18 July 2005

Portfolio: ICT and Support Services – Cllr S Metcalfe

Subject: e-Government

Officer contact for further information: Adrian Scott – Head of ICT (ext 4457)

Committee Secretary: Zoe Folley (ext 4532)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) **To agree the IEG capital grant allocation for 2005/6 (attached)**

(2) **To agree the IEG Government Return that was submitted in July 2005 (attached)**

(3)**To agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors and prioritises the implementation of IEG Priority Outcomes and the Council's local e-Government Strategy.**

Report

1. Central Government started the e-Government initiative in October 2001. The main focus for this initiative is to use modern information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the quality, efficiency and accessibility of public services. Although this initiative may initially appear to be about introducing ICT systems it is in fact a business reengineering initiative. The ICT element is purely one of the enablers of this business reengineering that assists the business in being far more effective and efficient in delivering Council services. Although disappointingly, to date, nearly all e-Government projects across England have been focussed on ICT systems and solutions, and the far more difficult challenge of changing the way Local Government delivers and manages its business have not been addressed

2. Central Government via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is currently providing capital grants, called Implementing e-Government grants (IEG), to assist Local Authorities with their local e-Government plans. Appendix 1 sets out the e-Government projects undertaken by the Council that have benefited from these IEG capital grants over the past 3 years and the proposed projects for 2005/6 IEG grant. This appendix shows the current status of the project and the IEG capital budget allocation. The ongoing ICT maintenance costs (CSB) of these e-Government projects are not shown, as they form part of the corporate ICT maintenance budget. The total budget increase in ongoing corporate ICT maintenance as a result of these projects has been £30,000 to date with an additional £15,000 allocated for 2005/6.

3. Central Government, in order to monitor progress with the e-Government initiative and assess the required level of future capital grants, has placed a duty on all local authorities to produce an annual IEG Government return that sets the Council's current status for electronically enabling 100% of all interactions with the Public by January 2006. This year Central Government changed the return process into a fully electronic online return with a prescribed format.

4. The IEG Government return is also the mechanism that allows all local authorities to gain access to Central Government funding by way of the IEG Capital grant. This grant is given to each local authority that submits, to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), a satisfactory IEG return. The value of this grant was £200,000 for IEG1 in 2002/3 and a further £200,000 was awarded for IEG2 in 2003/4 last year the grant was raised to £350,000 for IEG3 and a grant of £150,000 is being made available for IEG4 in 2005/6.

5. As part of this years IEG return Central Government (ODPM) introduced two new elements to the monitoring of the e-Government targets.

6. Firstly the current Best Value Performance Indicator 157 (percentage of e-enabled interactions) now has a prescribed list of interactions; know as the Local Government Service List (LGSL). This list has been formulated by the ODPM and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). The LGSL contains all interactions that Central Government believe that Local Authorities should deliver electronically. Previously this list was created and agreed locally by each Authority. The Council's list contained some 246 interactions that were agreed as part of the Councils IEG1 process. The LGSL contains over 1000 interactions but many are not applicable to a District Council and these have been removed from the new local list that the Council is now using. However, the number of interactions now measured under this BVPI157 total 556, which is a significant increase above the previous total.

7. The second element of monitoring is the ODPM's introduction of "Priority Outcomes" for e-Government. This is a list of some 78 e-Government priorities that are focused on direct outcomes. This list, again, sets out how Central Government sees e-Government being implemented in Local Authorities. This list is broken down into 3 categories; Required, Good and Excellent. The ODPM expects Local Authorities to deliver all the "required" and "good" categories by December 2005. Many Local Authorities have complained at the late introduction of "priority outcomes" (September 2004) and many do not believe at this late stage in the initiative that 78 new targets can be accommodated into their current e-Government plans.

8. The current IEG Government return is attached as appendix 2. This includes the Council current progress with the newly introduced priority outcomes. The Government has recently announced that the IEG Government Return will now be required at 6-month intervals rather than annually. Therefore a return will be submitted in July and December each year.

Current e-Government Strategy

9. The Council established its current strategy in January 2002 with its submission of IEG1. This was modified slightly by IEG2 in October 2002 and restated by IEG3 in October 2003. IEG4 that was submitted in December 2004 did not require a strategic statement.

The Council's e-Government strategy can be broken down into two main themes as follows:

Customer Contact theme

The Council will enable all their customers to access services in a way that gives a more convenient and flexible service but in doing so allows the Council to work more effectively and become more efficient.

This is being achieved by:

- Allowing all customers online access to their relevant personal or business information, including money they owe, or their current position in relation to grant, benefit, licence or other regulatory applications. This will cover access by the Council suppliers to procurement information and online access to procurement opportunities.

- Providing an on-line payments facility that allows both personal and business payments to me made for a wide range of Council services

- Allow customers to apply for all relevant Council services online, where the legally possible. This will include applications for grants, benefits, licences and other regulatory services.

- Allow customers to book and pay for facilities, resources and events on-line.

- Allow customers to access and participate in the democratic decision making function of the Council. This will include full online access to the complete democratic decision making process.

The main enabling technology for the customer theme is web and telephone based "self service" applications and the use of a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Business theme

The Council will reengineer its back office functions and related processes to ensure the efficient delivery of the Customer theme.

The business theme is being achieved by:

- Implementing a dedicated corporate Customer Contact Centre (CCC) The CCC will have access to all relevant customer information via modern IT solutions from both internal Council services and other relevant Government agencies. This new business unit will facilitate all initial contact with customers of the Council. Currently over 80% of contact with the Council is made via the telephone and therefore the CCC will be making full use of all the other strands of the customer contact theme when facilitating customers via the telephone or face to face.

- Streamlining the Council's back office functions to fully accommodate the CCC and consider a "joined up" approach to the back office service both internally and with other Essex Local Authorities

- Introducing a corporate approach to procurement

- Introducing a comprehensive e-Government training programme to ensure that all staff are able to make effective use of the new ICT environment

- Considering the introduction of Home Working to allow for a more flexible approach to the recruitment and retention of staff and the releasing of office accommodation

The enabling technology for this theme will include the following key corporate components:

- A single corporate approach to the management, use and control of corporate ICT infrastructure (Voice and data networks, personal computers, mobile computing, mobile telephony, remote working, printers and related applications)

- A strategic corporate approach to back office systems. Back office systems relate to the specialist application used by Council staff to administrate and manage a specific business area or generic business function i.e. Council Tax, Financial Management, Planning, Housing, Benefits, ERDMS, GIS, CMS etc.

- A Content Management System (CMS). This manages and control what is commonly known as the Council's website.

- The integration of all back office systems, at the appropriate level, into a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The CRM effectively provides a single view of all customers of the Council and the related information (correspondence, contact, billing etc). Access to the CRM maybe granted to Members and other government agencies, with appropriate restrictions in place.

- A corporate Land and Property Management system that supports the National Land Inquiry System (NLIS) and the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG)

- A Geographical Information System (GIS) to allow all relevant information to be accurately visualised. This currently relates to mainly property based information.

- An Electronic Records and Document Management System (ERDMS) to allow for a single corporate records system for the whole Council. This system is critical for both the CCC and in addressing the expected growth in access to information generated by new rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000

- A Committee Management System to manage the complete democratic decision making process. To include the provision of electronic access to Members in support of their District Councillor duties.

- An e-Procurement/Purchasing system to manage the current manual process and to facilitate new methods of procurement. These include e-Tendering and e-Auctions

Progress with implementation of the e-Government Strategy

10. The Council like many other District Councils initially struggled with some of the concepts behind this Central Government initiative, particularly in completing the ODPM's IEG statement where additional support from the ODPM was required. Prior to the IEG initiative the Council had put in place a clear corporate ICT plan and a capital funding programme to support it. This investment greatly assisted the Council in addressing the ICT requirements of the initiative but in some ways limited the way the Council could make use of a capital based grant, as many of the assets required had already been purchased as part of the corporate ICT plan. However the Council has moved positively forward with many specific e-Government projects that have been focussed on the Councils local e-Government strategy. These are summarised in appendix 1.

11. The Council has set up a specific Officer group (ICT and e-Government Working Group) to monitor progress on these specific e-Government projects. The group has a representative from each Council service area and is chaired by the Officer e-Champion (currently a vacant position). The Head of ICT has been chairing this group since the absence of the former Chief Executive who was the Officer e-Champion. The Councils Member e-Champion is Councillor S Metcalfe (ICT and Support Services Portfolio Holder). The recently appointed Joint Chief Executives are currently considering how to address the Officer e-Champion role and the future structure of the Officer group.

12. The Council is being assisted in delivering its e-Government objectives by the Essex Online Partnership. This partnership has a membership of all Essex Districts Councils, Essex County Council, Police, Fire and Health Authorities. It was established in 2002 from ODPM funding and has been fully funded by its members since April 2004. The current annual membership fee is £20,000.

13. The main benefits of this partnership have been providing capacity to undertake specialist e-Government research and implementing Essex wide ICT infrastructure projects. A full analysis of the specific benefits realised by the Council from this partnership is currently being produced with some examples of this being noted below:

   • Implementing an Essex wide network to link all Local Authorities computer and telephone networks together. This is called the Essextranet. The Council is using this network for the transmission of sensitive e-mail between partners and the introduction of new systems to address current issues around information management of vulnerable groups in the community.

   • Implementing an Essex Broadband Strategy to deliver 100% broadband availability across Essex.

   • Assisting partners with the addressing of Priority Outcomes

   • Developing an Essex Smartcard strategy

14. The Council has a formal commitment to the Essex Online Partnership for a further two years and based on its current performance this will greatly assist the Council with its outstanding e-Government objectives. The current Essex Online Business Plan is attached.

Option for Action

15. IEG 4.5 Government Return (attached as Appendix 2)

16. IEG capital grant allocation for 2005/6 (attached as Appendix 1)

Statement in Support of Recommended Action

17. The Governments ambition for achieving 100% 'electronic government' by March 2006 is now seen by many as just the beginning of a whole new way of delivering public services. Although the true meaning of '100%' will require further definition it is quite clear that all Local Authorities have moved e-Government to the top of their strategic efficiency agenda. With the second series of Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) only a few months away, the use of ICT to support and deliver a far more cost efficient and effective public service will form a key part of this round of CPA reviews. The Council needs to take the opportunity to re-engineer its services by making best use of modern technology.

18. The newly formed ICT service is currently reviewing the Council's Corporate ICT Plan and will be publishing a new ICT Strategy in the Autumn 2005. This will set out the technological achievements to date and the way forward for the next 2 years. The Council needs to take the opportunity presented by the e-Government initiative to re-engineer its services by making best use of modern technology.

Consultation Undertaken:

19. The Council's Management Board and ICT and e-Government working group (senior management representation from all Council services) monitor progress on all e-Government projects. The Council is also represented (e-Government Member Champion, Joint Chief Executive (Resources) and e-Government lead officer) on the EOLP. The EOLP also works with Central Government agencies on national policy/strategy for e-Government.

Budget Provision: £150,000 from ODPM IEG Capital Grant in 2004/5

Personnel: Nil

Land: Nil

Community Plan/BVPP Reference: BVPI 157
Relevant Statutory Powers: None
Background Papers: Implementing Electronic Government Statement 2001/2002
Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None
Key Decision Reference: None

IEG Capital Grant Commitments - Project Profile - 2002-2006

Description	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Totals	Comments on system inplementation
Customer Contact Theme						
Committee Management System		50			50	In progress/Spend committed
E-Forms		20			20	Completed
National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG)	50		80		130	Part of the Integrated Planning System
HR Website redesign		10			10	Completed
Content Management system (Website)	100				100	Completed
Customer Relationship Management software			250		250	Report pending - Customer Contact Centre
Legal Case Management System			20		20	Completed
Electronic Payments		50			50	In progress/Spend committed
E-Democracy (Webcasting)				20	20	In progress/Spend committed
Subtotal	150	130	350	20	650	
Business Theme						
Telephony Upgrade (ACD)	50				50	Completed
Intranet (Enhancements)		30			30	Completed
Records Management - ERDMS (Pilot)		20		130	150	Pilot of Anite@work in Enviromental Health
Electronic Purchase Ordering		20			20	Completed
Total	200	200	350	150	900	